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The King's Palace

Anna Louise Strong

And

Margaret Josensons

California
Regional
Facility

THE KING'S PALACE



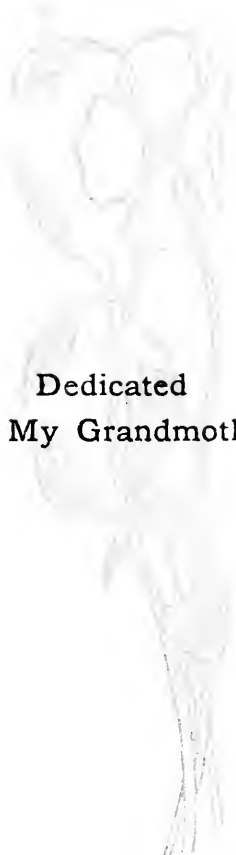
Written by
ANNA LOUISE STRONG

Author of
"The Song of the City," etc.

Illustrated by
MARGARET JOSEPHANS

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Oak Park, Illinois



**Dedicated
To My Grandmother**

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THE KING'S PALACE



CHARACTERS

HENRY RAYMOND

MRS. RAYMOND

ELISE RAYMOND

PHILIP DARRELL,
a young man of twenty-three

MR. GARDINER,
a man of somewhat over thirty.

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SCENE ONE

(Mrs. Raymond's sitting-room; Mrs. Raymond is seated at a table pouring coffee; Mr. Gardiner lounges near by, comfortably smoking; Philip Darrell is rising to go. A sunset is visible through the western windows.)

MRS. RAYMOND

You are going, are you? Elise will be down in a moment.

PHILIP (awkwardly and nervously)

Yes—well—if you would be so good. I did want to see Elise for a moment. (He sits down nervously on the edge of a chair. Mrs. Raymond speaks with an obvious attempt to put him at his ease.)

MRS. RAYMOND

Elise will be very sorry not to have you at her—little party.

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GARDINER

It must be a pleasure to be missed by Miss Raymond, a pleasure only to be balanced by the unhappiness of not attending her first affair.

MRS. RAYMOND

Oh, Philip will come to all the others. They are old friends, childhood playmates.

GARDINER

Ah, a favored friend! How fortunate!

PHILIP

I have to go west—on business. Oh—(He rises as Elise enters.)

ELISE

How are you, Phil? Good afternoon, Mr. Gardiner. (Philip sinks back into his seat)

GARDINER

We were hoping for a glimpse of you, in spite of the preparations for your festivities.

(Elise smiles rather vaguely, then she catches sight of the sunset.)

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ELISE

Oh! (She goes to the window and sits down where she can see the sunset without too much impoliteness to the guests. Philip rises hesitatingly and goes to sit by her. Gardiner chats with Mrs. Raymond.)

ELISE

Look at that gold! And that—oh, that wonderful dark, dark—is it purple or almost a green?

PHILIP (in a matter of fact tone)

Yes, it's a lovely sunset.

ELISE (disappointedly)

Oh!

PHILIP (miserably)

Now, I have displeased you. I wish—oh, how do you expect me to think of sunsets?

ELISE

But see the clouds! Those high, shining banks with the black between. It's like a gateway to a King's Palace.

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MRS. RAYMOND (turning)

Are you two off on that silly old game again?

ELISE

No, Mother.

PHILIP

What game? (Gardiner begins to look interested.)

MRS. RAYMOND

The King's Palace.

ELISE

I merely said that the sunset looked like a gateway, a palace gateway.

GARDINER (feeling his way)

And of course every palace is a king's palace?

ELISE (surprised and pleased)

Why, yes.

GARDINER

And every palace gateway is an opening into—into—

T H E K I N G ' S P A L A C E

ELISE

Oh, did you ever play it?

MRS. RAYMOND

You funny child! Of course not.

GARDINER

I have played at many things.

MRS. RAYMOND

(laughingly to Gardiner)

And always. Did you ever do anything else?

GARDINER

Why should I? I get all I want without.

MRS. RAYMOND

Always?

GARDINER

Provided the others are serious.

MRS. RAYMOND

Poor others!

GARDINER

Oh! no! Why?

PHILIP (to Elise)

Elise, I want to see you before I go.

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ELISE

How serious you are. You'll see me often enough. You always have and I suppose you always will, from this time forth and even—

GARDINER (catching the last words)

Lucky young man! Forevermore is a long time, and under the circumstances a most pleasant one. And how often am I to see you, Miss Raymond?

ELISE (embarrassed)

I don't know. I suppose it depends.

GARDINER

On you.

ELISE

Oh!

GARDINER

Am I to have a dance at the great event? Or were they all promised years and years ago?

ELISE

Of course you may; I should be—very much honored. (Then as Gardiner scrutinizes her with an amused smile, she proceeds with some

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embarrassment.) Years and years ago? How funny! One doesn't—

GARDINER

Knowing your mother, I do not think your first birthday would have been too soon to have engaged the dance.

MRS. RAYMOND

(smiling acknowledgement)

You improve daily.

GARDINER (to Elise)

But how about the King's Palace?

ELISE

Oh, that was a game I used to play.

MRS. RAYMOND

A very childish game.

GARDINER

With Philip?

PHILIP

Yes.

ELISE

Sometimes.

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PHILIP (with a sudden fierceness)
Whom else?

ELISE

Oh, you weren't always in it, Philip. Sometimes I was quite, quite alone.

GARDINER

In the palace?

ELISE

No, in playing. It was never lonely in the palace.

GARDINER

Of course not. Palaces are always all that one desires.

ELISE (with interest)

How do you know? Do you own one, too?

GARDINER (with a smile)

Ah, that would be telling.

PHILIP (pleading)

But it was best when we played together, wasn't it?

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ELISE (weighing the matter)

In some ways. And in some ways it was nicer alone.

GARDINER

Didn't Philip play well? You should try me. I am very good at playing.

ELISE

Oh, Philip was very, very obliging.—But I don't think he always saw much sense in the game.

MRS. RAYMOND (apologetically)

Philip was older than you, my dear, and much more sensible.

ELISE

It began with fairy-tales, I think. And with dad's music.

MRS. RAYMOND

Elise is so imaginative. She used to make me read fairy-tales by the hour.

ELISE

Poor mamma. I know you hated them.

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MRS. RAYMOND

(with a virtuous air of motherly sacrifice)

She gets it from poor dear Henry.

GARDINER

Oh, I intended to ask you. How is Mr. Raymond's new departure coming on? A symphony, wasn't it?

MRS. RAYMOND

Quite well, musically, that is. He gets long letters of compliments, and from really good people. But financially—Oh, imagination is interesting, but not paying. If it weren't that I have some money of my own—(She sighs.)

GARDINER (to Elise)

And to continue—

ELISE

Oh, the King's Palace. There isn't much more to tell. It was simply a wonderful place, where everything happened exactly right.

GARDINER

As one wished? Or as one thought one ought to wish?

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE (with pleased surprise)

Both. For in the King's Palace one always wishes the things one ought.

GARDINER

Of course! How stupid of me!

ELISE

And the people you love always love you.

GARDINER

But for that you would not need the palace.

ELISE

(smiling but a little impatient)

I am talking in general. In the world outside—oh, sometimes I think love doesn't go right more than once in a thousand times. You adore one person and that person adores another, and that one still another, and so it goes. Perhaps it's because it's hard to have very much respect, still less adoration, for the opinion of a person who thinks too highly of you.

GARDINER

How wise we are!

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MRS. RAYMOND

Why, Elise, dear, what dreadful ideas you have!

ELISE (to Gardiner)

Now you are laughing at me.

GARDINER

I! Never!

ELISE

(conclusively, with a touch of defiance)

So every time things didn't go right—in the world outside, I mean—I played King's Palace.

GARDINER

How charming!

ELISE (seriously)

Yes, it was very lovely.

PHILIP

(who has been trying for some time to get in a word)

I suppose—if I am to take the night train—
(He rises and looks miserably at Elise.)

GARDINER (to Mrs. Raymond)

And really, I have imposed quite too long

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upon your patience. But—the temptation! There are some people one dislikes to leave, even at the risk of boring them.

MRS. RAYMOND

Better and better! As if I didn't know the real attraction.

GARDINER

The two attractions. (To Elise) I have a dance, then, tomorrow night.

(Elise nods.) Good afternoon. (Exit Gardiner)

MRS. RAYMOND

(to Philip, who still stands undetermined)

Don't go yet. You must have time enough before the train, unless you have other engagements?

PHILIP

Well, perhaps—(He sits down.)

MRS. RAYMOND

I am sorry about tomorrow night.

PHILIP

So am I.

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MRS. RAYMOND

Especially since the labor of preparation will deprive me of your company now. (Philip starts to rise. She waves him back.) Oh, Elise will take care of you, won't you?

ELISE

Of course.

MRS. RAYMOND

Then allow me to wish you a pleasant journey and a quick return. (She gives him her hand. Exit)

(Elise wanders slowly around the table and then goes over to the window.)

ELISE

The sunset is faded and the golden gateway—is closed.

PHILIP

Elise?

ELISE

Yes? (She walks across the room and stops to fuss with the cups.)

PHILIP

Elise?

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ELISE (with a little impatience)

Well? (Suddenly she catches sight of his eyes gazing intently at her and starts.) Oh! (She begins to talk rapidly and nervously, fighting against expression on his part.) Why, I am very sorry you are going west, Philip, very sorry. What business did you say? But never mind, I am sure you wouldn't go unless it was important. The west is a lovely place. I should like to go west some time.

PHILIP (interrupting)

Elise, did you mean what you said just now?

ELISE (still rapidly)

I suppose so. But I said so many things. Don't you think Mr. Gardiner is an interesting man? I think he's a little bit like father. And then he understands everything so well, about palaces, I mean.

PHILIP (doggedly)

I mean what you said about love, in the world outside, and its not coming right but once in a thousand times.

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ELISE (slowly)

Well, I suppose that's true, usually. (Again she catches sight of his face and hurries on.) Of course I don't know that it's mathematically correct. I was never any good at mathematics. Perhaps (seeking relief in flippancy) ten thousand would be nearer. What do you think?

PHILIP

I hope not. Now—now—I love you, Elise. (despairingly) You love me, don't you?

ELISE

Don't, don't, Philip. Oh dear, oh dear, I'm so sorry.

PHILIP

(coming irresolutely nearer after a pause)

Don't be sorry, Elise. It's not your fault.

ELISE

Oh, Philip, I like you ever so much, you know.

PHILIP

I know. And you have never—you have never given me any reason to—It's not your fault,

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Elise. You have always done everything you should.

ELISE

Thank you, Philip.

PHILIP

But, you see, I couldn't help hoping, and I can't help it now.

ELISE

Don't hope, Philip. It's no use. Never.

PHILIP

I know I'm not nearly good enough, Elise. I always knew that.

ELISE

Oh, hush, you are very good, Philip.

PHILIP

I know I don't understand things—about palaces. And I can't talk the way Gardiner does. But, Elise, I really think I feel the things he says as much as he does. Perhaps even more. Now tonight when you talked of the gold and the purple-green and all I could say was "It's a lovely sunset," I know you were

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disappointed, Elise. And all the time I thought—oh, what does it matter what I thought?

ELISE

Don't hope, Philip. It's no use. Never.

PHILIP

I would try to play, you know I would.

ELISE

You would always be obliging, Philip.

PHILIP

Well, and shall I tell you what I thought? That you belonged in the sunset, and that I did not know how to go there. And meantime the world was turning, turning, and would shut the sunset out of my sight so soon.

(A pause.)

PHILIP

I think I had better go now.

ELISE

I'm—I'm so very sorry (Then as he still sits there in utter dejection she bends over him with a semi-maternal sympathy.) If you want

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—would you like—just this once, to kiss me good-bye?

PHILIP (seizing her hands)

Oh, Elise (she shrinks back involuntarily. He looks at her steadily for a moment) Thank you. No. Good-bye. (Exit quickly.)

ELISE

(sinking into a seat near the table)

Oh, Philip, Philip, why did you? You were so nice and I liked you so much. (She fusses with the coffee cups and looks into the pitcher.) The coffee's all gone and the cakes, too. There isn't anything left but some of Mr. Gardiner's old ashes. (She brushes them nervously to the floor. Enter Mr. Raymond. Elise throws herself into his arms.) Dadda!

MR. RAYMOND

(holding her off at arms' length and looking at her affectionately)

Baby, baby, you surprise me. I thought I was to have a young lady daughter tomorrow night?

ELISE

But it isn't tomorrow night yet.

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MR. RAYMOND

No, too bad, isn't it? Still another day before we are quite grown up.

ELISE

Oh, you don't know, dad-da, you don't know how grown up I am. I don't like it to be grown up.

MR. RAYMOND

What's worrying the baby now? Can't it get the moon?

ELISE

Father! (Mr. Raymond looks at her seriously.)

MR. RAYMOND

Oh, it isn't dad-da any more. Well, Elsie?

ELISE

Oh, dad-da—(she stops) no! Why, why—I've a conundrum for you.

MR. RAYMOND

Yes?

ELISE

Some of the girls were discussing it the other day.

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MR. RAYMOND

Ah, purely impersonal problem?

ELISE

Of course.

MR. RAYMOND

Oh!

ELISE (gaily)

Which would you choose, a man who was good but not interesting, or a man who was interesting but not—well, not good?

MR. RAYMOND

Impossible conditions, my dear! A man who was good couldn't help being interesting—as a specimen. Rare extinct genus and all that sort of thing.

ELISE

Don't be funny. I mean it.

MR. RAYMOND

Choose? For what? Matrimony?

ELISE

Of course.

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MR. RAYMOND

Neither, my dear. I'd choose the lake, or a pistol, or carbolic acid at a pinch.

ELISE

But if you married a man who was good but not interesting, you would want to kill him in a week, wouldn't you, dad-da?

MR. RAYMOND

I! Far be it from me, baby. And besides, I wouldn't marry a man.

ELISE

Do be sensible. A girl would.

MR. RAYMOND

What? Marry him?

ELISE

No, want to kill him.

MR. RAYMOND

But if you married a man who was interesting but not good, he might kill you instead.

ELISE (with a mock-virtuous air)

I would rather be killed than be a murderess.

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MR. RAYMOND

That's because you are good.

ELISE

And not interesting.

MR. RAYMOND

Oh, some people are both. And when they happen to be pretty as well—you just wait till tomorrow night.

ELISE

Will it be very beautiful, like a dream come true?

MR. RAYMOND

No, like an awakening. I think—I hope you will like it.

(Elise goes to the window and looks out, then turns suddenly.)

ELISE

Father, is it wicked of me to feel so excited and happy?

MR. RAYMOND

Wicked? Why?

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ELISE (seriously)

Because I think it is.

MR. RAYMOND

What's the matter, Elise?

ELISE

Because just five minutes ago I felt very miserable.

MR. RAYMOND

Well?

ELISE

And tonight, when I think things over, I am sure, (with determination) quite sure, that I shall feel miserable again. I ought to feel miserable, but I don't. Only excited.

MR. RAYMOND (quickly)

Who's been here? Gardiner?

ELISE

And Philip.

MR. RAYMOND

Oh, Philip's not exciting. Why, Elsie, what's the matter?

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ELISE

(dropping her head on his shoulder)
Nothing.

MR. RAYMOND (patting her head)

There, there, Elsie. (He holds her face away from him and looks at her questioningly. She nods.) Poor baby. It was too sudden, baby. I thought it would come tomorrow night—the awakening. (She releases herself slowly.) So you have grown up (she nods); you have left your dolls, (she nods) your palaces—

ELISE

Have I? Oh, must I?

MR. RAYMOND

Haven't you, haven't you? Well, we'll see what your mother can do for it tomorrow night. We'll see if the glory and glamor of a ball are not a fit substitute for palaces.

ELISE

And are they?

MR. RAYMOND

Ah, who knows, who knows?

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MRS. RAYMOND (calling from without)
Elsie, Henry, dinner.

MR. RAYMOND (laughingly)
That at least is the call of reality.
(Exeunt.)

End of Scene I.



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SCENE TWO

(A large veranda, partly shut in by trees and vines. Behind are windows through which come the light and music of a dance. A door opens from the room behind and Elise comes out, followed by Gardiner.)

ELISE

(drawing a long breath and holding out her arms)

How good this is! (Gardiner looks at her with a swift, scrutinizing smile.)

Why do you suppose they think they are having a good time back in there? Don't they know—this? (vaguely indicating the night, everything included)

GARDINER

Would you want them to? If they knew, we could not have the veranda alone.

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ELISE

Of course I should want them to be happy—as happy as I am.

(From time to time Gardiner continues to smile at her with amused scrutiny, but it makes little difference, as she seldom looks directly at him.)

GARDINER

But as long as they enjoy it, why not? It was a pleasant party.

ELISE

Oh, it was beautiful. The lights and the music and the red roses. I am so glad mother wouldn't let me see it till it was all ready. And the dancing and the people; it was very exciting. I thought at first I should never have enough of it.

GARDINER

Yet you let me bring you away for our dance. Thank you for the sacrifice.

ELISE

Sacrifice, oh no! Do you know, I thought I enjoyed it in there, but as soon as I stepped

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into the darkness I knew that the whole evening had been one long restlessness and that this (She draws a long breath and indicates by a slight, swaying movement the night and the trees.) was what I wanted.

GARDINER

And shall I tell you what else you thought?

ELISE

Yes.

GARDINER

That this was much more like—the King's Palace.

ELISE (with a low cry of joy)

Oh, you know it, you know it. How do you know? Philip never could guess.

GARDINER

Perhaps he didn't care to as much as I?

ELISE (with serious justice)

Oh, yes, he did. Philip was very nice. He always tried.

GARDINER

Perhaps then it's because I've—I've—

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ELISE

You've been in the King's Palace. Oh, I thought you had.

GARDINER

Who knows?

ELISE

How lovely! Then you must tell me all about it. Was your palace in a deep, deep valley where the trees grew so close that when you once got in you never could get out again, or was it on the shore of a wild sea where the waves beat under the palace walls all night long?

GARDINER

For me there were many places and many, many palaces, yet they all belonged to the same king.

ELISE

Why, that's the loveliest of all! And where was the last one?

GARDINER

The last one was in a girl's eyes.

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“On the shore of a wild sea where
the waves beat under the palace walls
all night long.”

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ELISE (puzzled)

Why, that's pretty. But it doesn't seem like the same game. (She laughs.) Oh, now it's I that do not understand, and it used to be Philip. But never mind; we shall manage beautifully. For do you know—(She leans over the railing and takes a long look at the stars, draws a deep breath, and whispers laughingly and confidentially.) we are in the King's Palace tonight.

GARDINER

What a beautiful roof!

ELISE

A roof of light and darkness!

GARDINER

And where are the walls?

ELISE

There are no walls. There used to be, but they grew and they grew and they grew till they took in all the earth and the sun and the moon and the stars, and now they're so far away that you can't even think the distance.

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GARDINER

I think the walls are very narrow and shut us in all by ourselves, so that the people there can't even see inside.

ELISE

Oh, but everyone could get into the King's Palace, if they only wanted to. The King's Palace must be big.

GARDINER

No, it is small, very small. This palace is.

ELISE (sighing)

All right, if you want it that way. But next time I'm going to have it big.

GARDINER

And may I play king in the palace?

ELISE (doubtfully)

Why—why—nobody was ever king!

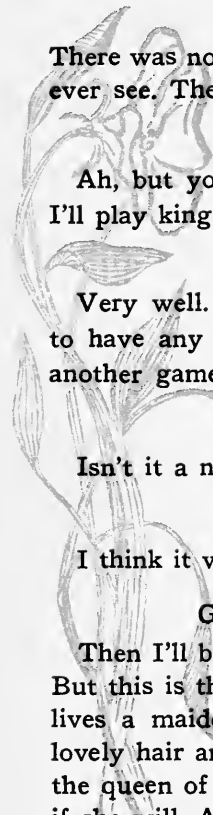
GARDINER

So you were a maiden queen, the only ruler.

ELISE (surprised)

Why, no, I wasn't queen, I just went there.

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There was no king—that is, no king you could ever see. There was only—the King's Palace.

GARDINER

Ah, but you must have a king, you know. I'll play king.

ELISE (troubled)

Very well. But it doesn't seem quite right to have any one be king. It will have to be another game altogether.

GARDINER

Isn't it a nice game?

ELISE

I think it will be. We'll try.

GARDINER (slowly)

Then I'll be king, and I have many palaces. But this is the most beautiful of all. For in it lives a maiden with deep, deep eyes and lovely hair and a wonderful smile. And she is the queen of the palace and of all the palaces if she will. And every evening we wander together over the dark earth and under the dark trees, till we come to an open space by a little

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lake, where the long thick grass grows down to the water's edge. (A pause.)

ELISE (with a satisfied sigh)
That's lovely!

GARDINER (slowly and significantly)
And we sit down on the grass by the lake. And at first we talk, and then for a while the night birds sing and the crickets chirp and then there is—silence. (A pause. Elise draws a deep breath. Gardiner goes on more rapidly.) For my queen knows, as I know, too, that there is but one thing worth while in life, but one use for the King's Palace, and that is—this! (He embraces her passionately, kissing her on the mouth.)

ELISE (struggling)
No—oh—no.

GARDINER (kissing her face and throat)
And this—and this—

(Elise succeeds in freeing herself and leans weakly against a pillar for support.)

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ELISE (angrily and miserably)

No—oh, no.

GARDINER

Elise, I am mad. Elise, Elise, I adore you!

ELISE (gasping)

I must go in—I must go in (She starts to the door.)

GARDINER

Elise, listen, hear me.

ELISE

I must go in, I must—Oh, I can't go in, not yet. (She leans against the house near the door.)

GARDINER (approaching)

Elise.

ELISE

Don't touch me!

GARDINER (appealing)

Elise!

ELISE

I'll listen, I'll listen. Only don't come any nearer.

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GARDINER

But don't you see, Elise, don't you see? This is really the end, the height, the climax of all those dreams, those dreams of the King's Palace.

ELISE

Oh, you have spoiled it. It was never that way at all.

GARDINER

You did not know? I thought you knew, but I believe now that you didn't. But whether you knew or not, it is true.

ELISE (still dazed)

What is true?

GARDINER

That there is but one thing worth while in life, but one use for the King's Palace.

ELISE

No, oh no. There were others.

GARDINER

Elise, listen. Your dreams, your King's Palace,—that is play. This is real. And this

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is the fulfilment of the dream. It is what you want without knowing that you want it. Romance—did you not dream of it in the palace? Why else the lonely valley and the wild sea? What is all your dreaming but a longing for romance? And did you never, in the very midst of the dream, in the very heart of the palace, did you never feel a sudden restlessness, a sudden dissatisfaction, a sudden craving for the touch of the real? Did you never question?

ELISE (unwillingly)

Yes.

GARDINER

And this is the answer. This is the romance which is also real. This is what you have dreamed and more. Do not hold back from the completion of the vision. Give yourself up to it—entirely, gloriously. Come now, it is reasonable, is it not? You have dreamed; accept the answer. (He comes nearer.)

ELISE

Don't touch me!—I wish I knew; I wish I knew.

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GARDINER

I know. Take my word for it. I have lived somewhat longer than you and I have known life. And I bring you word that the one thing worth while in it is romance,—romance of dream, romance of adventure, romance of madness, romance of love. (He comes slowly nearer.)

ELISE (gasping for breath)

Don't. Oh, I wish I knew! I wonder—

(As he is about to reach her and is standing in front of the door to the room, it opens and Mrs. Raymond appears in a blaze of light. Elise and Gardiner start back.)

MRS. RAYMOND

Where have you been, Elise? They have been asking for you. You missed two dances.

GARDINER (recovering himself)

How the light startled us! We were just at the door on our way in. I am sorry to have detained Miss Raymond. The night was so beautiful and we have been discussing the King's Palace.

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MRS. RAYMOND

So you are going to humor that pretense too?

GARDINER

It is a beautiful pretense. (To Elise, as she enters.) And consider my views, Miss Raymond, on the King's Palace. They are the true ones.

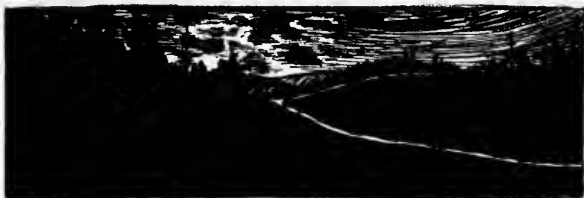
ELISE (in a choked voice)

I shall have to consider them. (Exit with Mrs. Raymond.)

GARDINER

So? (He looks at the sky, whistles a low tune and goes into the room.)

End of Scene Two.



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SCENE THREE

(Mrs. Raymond's sitting room, after the dance. Mrs. Raymond busy looking over some of the details that need clearing up before retiring. Enter Elise. She lays her hand wearily on her mother's shoulder.)

ELISE

I am so tired, mother, so tired.

MRS. RAYMOND

Yes, it is later than you are used to. You must go to bed.

ELISE

But, mother, it is not that kind of tired.

MRS. RAYMOND

There is only one kind of tired, my dear.

ELISE (making a movement of protest)
No—

THE KING'S PALACE

MRS. RAYMOND

You will be all right in the morning. Come.

ELISE

I don't want to be alone just now. Please.
Just for a little while.

MRS. RAYMOND (impatiently)

What do you want?

ELISE

Please be good, mother. Now sit here. (She puts a cushion on a low chair, makes her mother sit down, then throws herself on the floor with her head against her mother's knees. She takes her mother's hands and places them on her forehead.) Now dear, you can do whatever you want, but don't speak to me, for I'm going to pretend.

MRS. RAYMOND

What are you going to pretend?

ELISE

That you are my mother. My really, truly mother, the mother I had—in the King's Palace.

THE KING'S PALACE

MRS. RAYMOND

That game! But you are too old for that now.

ELISE

Let me. Just for a little while.

(A pause. Mrs. Raymond looks uneasily toward the other rooms of the house.)

MRS. RAYMOND

I am needed. I'll be back soon. (Exit.)

ELISE

(After a pause, raising her head drearily.)

I wonder if the chair would do. (She pulls the cushion to the chair edge, and leans her cheek against it. After a moment she raises herself and begins to speak dreamily, straight in front of her, growing more and more animated.) Oh, mother dear, oh mother dear, is it true, is it true? Be good to me, mother dear. I don't know—I don't know anything at all. If you would only tell me so that I could be sure. (She drops back, then rises suddenly.) Oh, where are you? where are you? it is all so

THE KING'S PALACE

far away tonight. Oh, you have left me alone. You don't care. (She rises, saying slowly:)

"Oh, one to the King's high throne might win,
Worthily rule in the palace halls,
But never dream that he dwelt therein.
And one would play with the coronals,
Count them all in a night and a day—
Heigho, heigho, and away, away."

The first is true, so true. I wonder about the second. The second—oh! (She stops with a long shudder of recollection, throws herself into a chair by the table and hides her face. At last she rises, goes wearily to the window, and looks out.)

Orion, and Sirius, and—oh, there are the Pleiades! And what a dear little cloud! (A pause, then passionately.) You, you beautiful, you wonderful, you! (Slowly and passionately she throws a kiss out of the window.) I love you, you. (She drops into a low chair beside the window, still gazing out. At last she lays her arm on the sill and drops her head on her arm. A long pause. Enter Mr. Raymond.)

THE KING'S PALACE



"Orion and Sirius, and—oh, there
are the Pleiades!"

THE KING'S PALACE

MR. RAYMOND

Well, baby! (Elise starts and rises.) Sleepy?
Did you have a good time?

ELISE

(glancing at the chair by the window)
I have had—a beautiful time.

MR. RAYMOND (teasingly)
I saw you go out on the porch with Gardiner.

ELISE

Yes?

MR. RAYMOND

Well?

ELISE

It was a beautiful night.

MR. RAYMOND

And Gardiner knows how to make the most
of a beautiful night, eh?

ELISE (shrinking)

Don't, father.

MR. RAYMOND

(Kissing her forehead suddenly.)
Forgive me, dear. But you like him?

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE

No.

MR. RAYMOND

Oh! (A pause.)

ELISE

Father, he's the most fascinating man I ever met.

MR. RAYMOND

Ah, so?

ELISE

But I don't like him. He—he spoils my world.

MR. RAYMOND

Elise, dear, I think I am rather glad. You prefer Philip, then?

ELISE

Father, if I had to be married tomorrow, I'd take Philip. But—

MR. RAYMOND

Well?

ELISE (gaily)

I don't have to be married tomorrow.

THE KING'S PALACE

MR. RAYMOND

But sometime?

ELISE

No, never.

MR. RAYMOND (lightly)

He's an estimable young man.

ELISE

Father, he is good. He is very, very good. He is kind, and generous, and he has reverence. Oh, I almost think that the one thing needful, the one thing that is best, is reverence. For yourself, you know, and for other people, and for everything you hold beautiful and good, yes, and for everything anyone holds beautiful and good,—because it is sacred to someone. But, but—(She hums lightly.)

“Oh, one to the king's high throne might win,
Worthily rule in the palace halls,
And never dream that he dwelt therein.”

He would never know, father.

MR. RAYMOND

About what?

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE

Oh, about everything.

MR. RAYMOND

I see. He has reverence without understanding, while Gardiner understands (Elise nods.) and does not reverence.

ELISE

Does one understand, really, truly, without reverence?

MR. RAYMOND

Some people would say one doesn't understand with it. There, there, baby, I didn't mean it that way. I think, I rather think you may be right. And yet Gardiner spoils Philip for you (Elsie starts and acquiesces.) even as Philip spoils Gardiner. And neither of them would do for the King's Palace.

ELISE

Father!

MR. RAYMOND

Oh, baby, baby, do you think I've never been there—in the King's Palace?

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE

I didn't know. I always thought—Have you?

MR. RAYMOND

We are most of us there some time. Most of us, not all.

ELISE

And isn't it beautiful?

MR. RAYMOND

It was heaven.

ELISE

Oh, why did you ever come away?

MR. RAYMOND

Once upon a time—once upon a time,—when the prince had wandered a long way from the palace, he met a beautiful maiden.

ELISE (breathlessly)

Yes, mother—go on.

MR. RAYMOND

And she would not believe what he told her about the palace and she didn't much care for palaces anyway, and so—

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE (sadly)

And so he had to stay away?

MR. RAYMOND (lightly)

And so he never wanted to come back to the palace again.

ELISE (incredulously)

He never wanted to?

MR. RAYMOND

At any rate he never came. (A pause.)

MR. RAYMOND

Well, are you going to come out of the palace, Elise?

ELISE

Is it nicer outside?

MR. RAYMOND

Of course—that is, it's much more comfortable. At least—oh, at any rate one succeeds better. Your mother now, she's a success. And I—well, I don't suppose most people think I am. The little time I lived in the palace—it spoiled me for other things.

THE KING'S PALACE

ELISE

But that was because you left. Suppose you had stayed?

MR. RAYMOND

I don't know, dear. But I should have needed—

ELISE

What?

MR. RAYMOND

A different world.

ELISE

Oh, but the world is different in the King's Palace.

MR. RAYMOND (wearily)

Is it, dear? I had almost forgotten.

ELISE

You worry me a little. I wish I knew. (She moves irresolutely to the window.) Oh, the stars know everything.

MR. RAYMOND

In the King's Palace. (Enter Mrs. Raymond.)

THE KING'S PALACE

MRS. RAYMOND (without seeing Elise)

Well, it's over. Went off rather well, don't you think?

MR. RAYMOND

A most unusual evening.

MRS. RAYMOND

What do you suppose Gardiner means? I must speak to—(Mr. Raymond indicates Elise with a warning glance.) Elise! You here! I thought you had gone to bed.

(Elise comes forward with a light step.)

ELISE

I am going, mother.

MR. RAYMOND

And Elise,—Mr. Gardiner, you know—it's all right this time, but you really shouldn't again—at the beginning of your season, too.

ELISE

I do not think I care to see Mr. Gardiner again.

MRS. RAYMOND

Oh, I do not mean it that way. Just be—

THE KING'S PALACE

well, there are plenty of other people, you know. Don't let him monopolize you. Not but what he's an interesting young man.

ELISE

I do not think I care to see Mr. Gardiner again.

MRS. RAYMOND

What's got into you now? Is it Philip?

ELISE

No, mother.

MRS. RAYMOND

What do you expect to do then?

ELISE

I am going back (with a radiant glance at her father) to the King's Palace.

MRS. RAYMOND (contemptuously)

The King's Palace? Oh, you mean your dolls.

ELISE (stops, struck by the word)

Dolls, do I? (She lets her hands fall with a despairing gesture.) Oh, I don't know. But I

THE KING'S PALACE

am going, I am going, whether I know or not.
(Exit. As she passes the window she sways
toward it lightly, draws a deep breath, looking
up at the stars, smiles, and goes out.)

THE END.





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